

November 1, 2002

**John Bridgeland, Director
USA Freedom Corps
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500**

Dear Mr. Bridgeland:

Thank you for joining us on October 2. We appreciate your willingness to engage in a conversation with educators who share your commitment to educating informed and responsible citizens. Your overview of the administration's national initiative on American history, civics, and service framed our deliberations. We look forward to continuing this dialogue and thank you for the invitation to join you at the February 2003 summit.

In response to your invitation to offer recommendations to strengthen the civic mission of education, we suggest the following:

- Work to reassert the primacy and purposefulness of civic education, recognizing that educating virtuous citizens is the historic purpose of American education.
- Frame the civic mission of education in ways that provide young citizens with opportunities to practice democracy, engage in service-learning, and acquire civic dispositions.
- Recognize the global context of citizenship in the 21st century.
- Make more explicit the link between civic education, service-learning, and American history.
- Connect No Child Left Behind and other important federal education initiatives to the civic mission of education.
- Challenge state policymakers to take seriously the civic mission of education.
- Showcase exemplary programs, practices, and school districts, inviting youth leaders and educators to participate in Administration-sponsored events.
- Sustain and enrich the Administration's ongoing civic education dialogue.

By the close of the meeting, participants gave general approval to the "sense of the meeting" statement that follows:

At this critical moment in our nation's history, it is imperative that Americans renew and reaffirm the civic mission of every school.

The entire school culture must reflect an abiding commitment to the democratic first principles of freedom and justice found in our framing documents, especially the U.S. Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. The rights and responsibilities of citizenship must be taught across the curriculum and integrated into the learning that takes place at all grade levels, K-16.

Beyond a thorough grounding in history and civics, all students should have meaningful opportunities to practice the civic skills and virtues necessary for active and effective citizenship. Schools model freedom and justice when all members of the school community have a real voice in shaping the life of the school. Schools inspire active citizenship when they encourage civic engagement through service and active involvement in the life of the community.

Reaffirming this civic mission of schools is essential in order to sustain and expand the American experiment in freedom and democracy.

We look forward to working in concert with your office to ensure all students deepen their understanding of American history, appreciate their important role as citizen in a democratic republic, and acquire the competencies and attitudes that equip them well to fulfill these historic responsibilities. We wish you well as you work to advance our shared interests in American history, civics, and service.

With warmest personal regards,

Gene R. Carter
Executive Director
ASCD

Susan Griffin
Executive Director
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Terry Pickeral
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The Center for Learning & Democracy, ECS